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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 000308

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TAGS: UNMIK UNSC

SUBJECT: NEW YORK STILL IN DISARRAY ON KOSOVO END GAME

REF: USUN 225

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro Wolff for Reasons 1.4 B/D.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. In the aftermath of the February 19 and March 17 violence in Kosovo, UN component parts (DPKO, UNMIK, OLA) have been warily eyeing one another and approaching the UN-EU transition with different perspectives. Quint missions collectively have had little strategic guidance to offer, instead holding to an increasingly irrational hope that the embattled UN will itself produce a revised transition plan despite changing assumptions about the scope and timing of the UN's continued presence in Kosovo. Individual Quint missions seem to be arguing at cross-purposes to one another -- and in some cases even to their capitals -- in their bilateral meetings with the UN. Against this backdrop, coordinated Russian and Serbian pressure on the Secretariat remains unabated. USUN recommends that the USG guide Quint thinking towards a common policy that recognizes and takes all possible advantage of UN inability to expressly endorse a UN-EU transition by: (1) ensuring that ICO/EULEX continues to assume Ahtisaari responsibilities south of the Ibar; (2) deciding how far UNMIK should go to reconstruct and even expand its presence north of the Ibar; (3) reassuring DPKO that UNMIK need not react to the forthcoming Kosovo Constitution; and (4) pushing DPKO to continue drawing down UNMIK's presence wherever possible. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has been shell-shocked since the February 19 riots at Kosovo-Serbia border crossings and March 17 violence in north Mitrovica. Our DPKO contacts expect (correctly) no guidance from the Security Council and tell us frankly that they don't have a coherent policy of their own beyond a very general desire to fade from the Kosovo scene when possible. Content to allow the EU to assume Ahtisaari responsibilities as long as that could be achieved through quiet cooperation in Pristina, they admit to not knowing what to do in response to emerging obstacles to the rollout of EULEX in the north beyond reciting their "status neutral" nostrum.

¶3. (C) The original UNMIK-EU transition plan, of which DPKO regularly used to speak with approval in private, called for the Secretary-General to pronounce Kosovo's declaration of independence and subsequent recognitions of statehood a "changed circumstance" sufficient to require a greatly heightened EU role in Kosovo. Now our contacts hedge. The SYG having quietly blessed UNMIK cooperation with the new International Civil Office (ICO), DPKO is content to continue that cooperation in areas where UN-EU transition is not being seriously questioned, i.e., in the ethnic Albanian areas that make up most of Kosovo. For the Serb-dominant areas, especially in the north, DPKO is less certain that the EU rollout would be responsive to circumstances brought about by UDI and recognitions. Hence DPKO is not inclined to push Ban to declare the "changed circumstances" trigger the EU had expected for full ICO/EULEX rollout.

¶4. (C) Beyond the practical problems (procurement of vehicles and office space) lack of formal UNMIK-EU transition may bring, DPKO believes that ICO/EULEX is not able to deploy fully in the north anyway. Rather, DPKO understands that UNMIK must remain in place as a practical hedge against partition in the north or confrontation between ethnic Serbs in the north and ethnic Albanians in the south. Aware also that UNMIK's presence in the north has always depended on a delicate balance of force and quiet cooperation with Belgrade institutions, primarily Customs and Police, DPKO is attempting to re-establish an UNMIK presence that takes account of post-UDI realities.

¶5. (C) Individual Quint missions in New York -- notably the French and Italians -- have conveyed softer lines on the need for firm UNMIK/KFOR presences than other Quint members (and possibly softer than their own capitals). It is not clear to us that DPKO would welcome a clear Quint articulation of a UN-EU transition plan for Kosovo even if the Quint could offer one. It is clear to us, however, that the UN is so mired in DPKO-UNMIK recriminations stemming from the events of February 19 and March 17 that we should not expect the UN to itself develop a transition plan. If there is to be a revised transition plan, therefore, the Quint must produce it and we must sell it politically to Secretary-General Ban.

¶6. (C) USUN suggests that Quint engagement with DPKO feature a Quint-approved action plan. Elements we believe need to be incorporated include: (1) continuation with heightened urgency of ICO/EULEX cooperation on practical points of transition to include procurement of vehicles and building space; (2) continuation of the re-establishment of UNMIK's presence north of the Ibar with UNMIK discretion to engage

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Belgrade and of course KFOR as necessary; (3) recognition that the UN need not react to the forthcoming Kosovo Constitution; and (4) insistence that DPKO continue to quietly draw down UNMIK's presence as quickly as possible in those parts of Kosovo where ICO/EULEX is able to deploy.

¶7. (C) To buttress our arguments we need also to produce a clear strategic Quint vision for both the timing and nature of the UN's decreasing role and presence and the manner in which that role and presence are shifted to Kosovars where possible and the EU or ICO where still necessary.  
Wolff